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A

VILLAGE TALE.







A
VILLAGE TALE,
M O R A L,

SENTIMENTAL, AND HUMOUROUS.

BY

THOMAS WILSON,

AUTHOR OF

"The Use of Circulating Libraries, considered ;"
"A Description of Bromley, in Kent," &c. &c.

"Tis hard to say, if greater Want of Skill,
Appear in writing, or in judging, ill ;
"But of the two, let's dangerous is th' Offence,
"To tire our Patience, than mislead our Sense ;
"Some few in that, but Numbers err in this ;
"Ten censure wrong, for one who writes amiss.

Pore.

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PREFACE.



VARIOUS have been the opinions of all ages, on the utility of that species of literature, called Novels; England has had the honor of producing some of the most excellent compositions of this kind, which are still extant, and will be read with admiration, as long as men have virtue enough to admire a lovely portraiture of philanthropy, courage, patriotism, and every superior degree of mental accomplishment; but it is to be lamented that this class of writing has in some measure incurred the public odium, from the inroads made on the science, by the pens of obscene authors, who employ their

fertile genius, for the gratification of the depraved appetite of the sensualist, which delights only in scenes of immorality :—hence arises the objection against these publications :—the fanatic, under the specious pretence of preserving the morals of the rising generation, pronounces a grand anathema against every innocent production, which does not chime in with his enthusiastic doctrine, however it tends to expand and improve the mind ; he is of a reptile disposition, inimical to merit of every denomination, assuming the direful qualities of the fabled basilisk, he darts destruction at every literary object that meets his eye ;—but it is not thus with the candid enlightened genius, he treads not the garden of literature, in this superficial way ; he selects with discrimination whatever is excellent, and will not reject a curious plant, because there are weeds produced in the same soil.



Wide is the scene of the world; and multifarious the objects it produces; eccentric in their inclinations, and wandering through the confused path of anomalous pursuits, far distant from every system of rectitude; these will form an inexhaustible fund of heroes, to employ the pen of industry.

Encircled by folly and vice of every kind, the Novelist can never experience difficulty in finding a theme;—has he tired his creative fancy with the pleasing amusement of painting in highest colours the beauties of virtue, and the happiness generally accruing from a scrupulous attention to the strict discharge of moral duties, he has only to shift the scene to the regions of folly, which cannot fail to afford a copious display of matter *capere risum*.

If the satyrists of former times could have entertained an adequate idea of the progressive increase of fashionable depravity within a few years after them, they would have predicted, that the characters of their heroes, many of whom were then thought rather out of nature, would cease to be remarkable at a distant æra: the whimsical Partridge in the novel of Tom Jones, was doubtless esteemed as a first rate pedant; but there are few who cannot produce, among their acquaintance, a modern pedagogue to outvie him in absurdity; many of these are to be met with, in the metropolis and its environs, whose conversation is disgusting to the circle, in which they move; just learned enough to ring changes on the *hic—hæc—hoc* of scholastic erudition, they have derived little more knowledge of the world, than they brought with them into it.—I would not wish to insinuate that

this is a just picture of the fraternity in general, as I believe there are many whose abilities do honour to their profession.

But it is not this calling, which claims a privilege of monopolizing disgraceful followers; every profession in some degree acquires scandal from the degeneracy of its members: the more minute vices of mankind infest society, numerous as the myriads of insects which hover in the atmosphere, and like them, are only perceptible to the microscopic eye of the philosophic observer:—from this source the man of letters finds subject matter for animadversion:—embellished with the aid of fanciful description, the depravities of life form a fountain of caution for youth, who will attend to moral instruction, in the attractive garb of fiction, while they would turn a deaf ear to serious admonition:—such is the business of ro-

mance ;—whether a copious diffusion of these requisites are to be found in the Village Tale, is not for me to declare,—*Deforme est de seipso prædicare* ; I must yet take the liberty to say, that if the performance is found equal to the care I have taken in its composition, I have great hopes of meeting approbation from the candid inspector ;—at any rate I have some degree of claim to a negative virtue, in keeping it free from every loose idea, which might deservedly banish it from the library of the Fair.

Without further apology, I therefore submit this production, as an additional trifle to those, I have before obtruded on the Public.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE design of the following pages is to expose follies, not point out persons. VELUTI IN SPECULUM.

The merit of the work I am content to submit to the candour of the Public; if it has any, it will meet with justice. It may be said, I have sacrificed the useful to the agreeable: if then I do not instruct, I hope to amuse; acquainted in some measure with the human heart, I know it is impossible to please all.

The different characters pourtrayed in the Village Tale, have most of them come within my own knowledge, through the various scenes of life I have witnessed in different parts of the globe: the basis are facts, the structure is raised by fiction, embellished and adorned by art.

In the busy world I have been taught one grand lesson, that is, I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

I shall therefore close this address with the following anecdote: — A reverend gentleman, who was remarkably fond of hunting, one morning early, on his road to join the hounds, espied a shepherd-boy, and riding up to him, enquired, "What weather it would be?" — "Such as will please me," answered the lad. "Such as will please you," said the gentleman, (rather angry) "and pray what sort of weather is that?" "What pleases God," replied the boy. — The reverend gentleman turned his horse and rode off, without further interrogating the shepherd.

Permit me to add, that whatever may be the fate of this book, it will be such as will please me.

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*There is no safety where there is no strength—no strength
without union—no union without justice—no justice
where faith and truth are wanting to fulfil engage-
ments, either public or private.*

SIDNEY.

A

VILLAGE TALE.

CHAP. I.

A Journey in a Stage Coach.

*The world's a wood, in which all lose their way;
Though by a different path, each goes astray.*

A Friend to the editor of this trifle, having for nineteen years continued in trade, by unremitting industry, acquired a sufficiency to live independent.

At the age of forty, he relinquished business, and having settled his affairs, (being a single man) thought he could

not better amuse himself, and recruit his health, which was somewhat impaired by confinement and a too close application to business, than by occasional visits to the country; the remarks on his first excursion he favoured me with an account of, with permission (if I thought it worth the trouble) to give it to the world.—The following narrative is in his own words.

On one fine morning in the month of March, 1778, I proceeded to the inn from whence the coach to Aylesbury set out; and finding it ready to start, paid the fare, and took a seat, with five other passengers.

A stage coach, it has been observed, is a world in miniature; and my fellow travellers, in some measure, proved the remark a just one; they consisted of an elderly lady, who was (as she informed us)

going on a visit to her relations in the country ;—a blunt seaman, a lieutenant in the navy, with a wooden leg, who had strongly depicted on his countenance, that open and ingenuous temper, which is the characteristic of the sailor ;—a middle-aged genteel looking man ;—a methodist parson ;—a Jew ;—and myself.

Before the coach set off, the Israelite gave a shilling to a poor fellow who stood on the pavement, holding a box with combs, knives, and other nicknacks ; in return for which he received a bow, and God bless you. The methodist, who sat opposite the donor, enquired, Why he gave so much ? and received for answer, " BECAUSE HE IS A POOR JEW." " Ah ! had he been one of the disciples of the Lord, ejaculated the methodist, *with a sarcastic grin*—the coach proceeded, and before its final departure from the

metropolis, stopped to take up some parcels, when a poor woman with a child in her arms, asked charity; all but the preacher gave her a trifle; the Jew put a shilling into her hand; — “ *May be that gave you this, reward you with increase!* ” was the poor woman’s thanks. The methodist again enquired, Why he gave so much? and was again answered, “ **BECAUSE SHE IS A POOR CHRISTIAN;** ” and added, “ when I do an act of charity, I neither consider the religion, or country, of the object.— During the rest of his journey, this charitable man conversed but little, yet these few sentences were a volume. “ What, all aback, brother,” roared out the lieutenant; “ you shot too far ahead at first, and d—me, the old Jerusalem has made you strike, without firing a gun; God bless your charity,” continued he, addressing the Jew, “ I remember the chaplain

of the Thunderer once preached a d—n'd good sermon upon charity ; he was a devilish clever fellow, and could jaw away religion for two hours together ; I recollect he brought all up by swearing, if a man gave only a shilling in charity, with a good intention, he would be preferred when he got aloft ; and though you dont sail under the same colours with me, we may meet in the port of heaven together ; what say you, old square toes ? (at the same time giving the preacher a hearty shake by the shoulder) wont charity out-sail a number of sins ?” who replied, “ That he held in the utmost contempt the pomps and vanities of this world ;” he exclaimed against the want of faith and piety of people in the present times ; and then continued a lecture, stuffed with pious flourishes, and delivered with much self-sufficiency, which was neither noticed or interrupted, till he had in a shameful

manner, began to abuse the established church, and its ministers ; declaring, that only the elect of his own persuasion could be saved.

The gentleman, our fellow traveller, who had not spoke till now, put a stop to his harangue, by the following address, delivered in a manly tone of voice : “ Let none presume to set bounds to the mercy of our God ; we are all his creatures, and I am ashamed that any who call themselves Christians, should so scandalously abuse the established religion of that country, which fosters and protects them. You may wonder (continued he) to hear me speak thus ; sincerity creates many enemies, and but few friends—it is a virtue all esteem, although rarely found—however, I have always practised it, without at *any time wishing* to give offence. In answer to your illiberal aspersions, permit

me to say, although there are many good people of your sect, *some* of them are a compound of envy, vanity, and detraction." The methodist parson knit his brow and bit his lip, to little purpose; the officer had dropped asleep; the lady and myself seeming pleased with his discourse, he went on thus: "Your zeal I admire, your extravagance and noisy eloquence, I disapprove; superstition, and credulity, may appear innocent and impotent, but they are quite different things; nothing more powerful, nothing more formidable; they have held the world in fetters and ignorance, in all ages, and they are dangerous and important tools in the hands of designing men: if I can bring a person to believe what I please, by the same art I can bring him to act what I please; we have a right to examine all things, since we cannot tell what mischievous consequences our too easy belief may produce.

The methodist had just pronounced d—n—n on such doctrines, when the coach arrived at its second stage, and the preacher and the Jew, were at their journey's end; the latter politely took leave of his fellow travellers, but the former walked off without the least ceremony; our dinner was scarcely finished, when we were interrupted by the entrance of the coachman, who came to inform us he was ready to proceed.

We had no addition to our number, and the next ten miles were passed in agreeable conversation with the lady and gentleman, and some enlivening sallies of wit, (mixed with sea phrases) from the officer; here he was set down, and our conversation afterwards imperceptibly fell on ghosts, and goblins, which gave rise to the following observations from the lady:

“ I believe, (said she) there are but few country places without a ghost, or at least a haunted house in them ; in the village to which I am going, *every* house is haunted ; almost every inhabitant has seen the spectre ; it appears in various shapes, but only to one person at a time, the likeness it assumes in general is that of a white jack-ass without legs, galloping about the road and lanes : sometimes he is seen grazing in the fields without a head, and upon occasion, appears as a great green cat, or a blue dog, which neither scratches or bites, nor ever says an angry word to you, but stares you full in the face ; if you speak to it, it will not answer, and if you ask it a question, it holds its tongue.

“ It is odd, (continued the lady) that people should love to be frightened ; but old women, children, and servants, terrify

themselves, and one another, with stories of spirits and goblins."

"You are perfectly right, madam, (said our companion) fear first made ghosts; how often does our imagination run away with us; nothing weakens the mind more than the delusive horrors which the common stories of dæmons and ghosts bring along with them; we ought therefore to be careful what we believe; error is very prevalent, and yet upon what slight and shameful foundation does it stand."

"That consideration alone, (answered the lady) shews the lamentable weakness of human nature."

After some further trifling observations on the weather, the roads, &c. we arrived at Aylesbury. Having taken a polite leave of my fellow travellers, and fixing

my quarters at the George, (a very good inn) where the coach puts up, I strolled about the town for some time, and very fortunately met with an old acquaintance, who about seven years before, having experienced many disappointments and difficulties in trade, had retired with a small independence, to his native place, a village in the vicinity of this town.

He accompanied me to my inn, invited me to spend a few days at his house, and promised to call on me the next morning; I accepted his invitation, and after finishing our bottle, he took his departure, and I, after supper, retired to bed.

In the morning I was awakened by my friend, who informed me he had come to breakfast with me, and afterwards I must accompany him home.

After a chearful and hearty meal, and discharging my bill at the George, I attended my old friend to his rural habitation, some miles out of the town.

Situated at the entrance of a pleasant village, stood his small but neat house; he was what is called an old bachelor, but a most chearful one,—kept no horse, and only one servant, a decent middle-aged woman.

In walking round his garden, he observed to me, “ Though he had suffered *the stings and arrows of outrageous fortune*, his peace of mind was whole; that man, (continued he) whose conscience is free from reproach, may be regardless of the opinion of the multitude; this snug cottage affords me a contented shelter, and my grateful garden produces plenty; not all the riches in the world should tempt

me to forsake them. What is there in the power of riches to purchase more than I possess—CONTENT?—Here I enjoy the pleasures of retirement, innocent mirth, honest simplicity, and independence, with every *necessary* of life, and nature requires no more.—Stay with me some days; and take a view of this charming country;—to-night we have a club, at the only public house in the place; I belong to it and will introduce you; the members are unlearned but honest men,

I shall here conclude this chapter, and give my reader time to eat, drink, or sleep, as he may be inclined, and honestly confess it, do the same myself.

CHAP. II.

The Village Club.—QUID RIDES?

*Objects of satire do you wish to meet,
Out with your pen—they swarm in ev'ry street.*

THE village, of which my friend was an inhabitant, consisted of about sixty houses, with several adjoining farms, and some few gentlemen's seats, at various distances, and in different situations.

The parish church stood at one end, a little out of the road; and the only public house in the place at the other end.

Thus situated, it might with truth be said, this village possessed *variety in one.*

In the evening we went to the club; on the way my friend observed, that when high expectations are formed, disappointments are more heavily felt; therefore, said he, let me assure you, our members are all plain men, and some of them ignorant, yet inoffensive ones.

The president for this night is named Sampson, a tradesman in the village, very fond of using words, the meaning of which he has no comprehension of; the rest of the members consist of the schoolmaster, carpenter, bricklayer, butcher, baker, shop-keeper, parish clerk, (who is also a taylor) and the barber, who bleeds and draws teeth, (and is therefore called doctor), a few neighbouring farmers, and myself.

By this time we had got to the house, and being ushered into the club room,

found all the members assembled, except the doctor; after a salutation from the president, and being introduced by my friend, we seated ourselves.

A member, whom I understood was the schoolmaster, called on the chair for a song;—a song—a song—was vociferated from several mouths at once: the president sang a good old English ballad; but from his total ignorance of the true meaning of the words, he rendered into nonsense.

The next day my friend procured a copy, badly wrote, but spelt exactly as he sang it, as follows.

The President's Song.

Once the gods of the creeks, at an amorous feast;
 Large bowls with rich Hektor were quaffing,
 Merry Mopus amongst them was sat as I guess,
 Woman says the celestials love laughing.

On each in the synagogue the humerist roll'd;
 So that none could his joke sir approve,
 He sang, took rappee, and some good stories told,
 And at last, *first* began upon Jove.

Dire Atlas, who long has the tune of us bore,
 Grows greasily tired of late,
 He says that mankind are not worse than before,
 So his legs should be eas'd of their weight.

Jove knowing the earth round dire Atlas was furl'd,
 On his shoulders commanded us all,
 Gave his daughter distraction the charge of this world,
 And she flung it about for a ball.

Miss pleas'd to be present, survey'd the globe round,
 To see what each climer was worth,
 Like a diamond the whole, with a rat-and-spear-bound,
 And she ware-house-ly planted the earth.

With silver, gold, jewels, she Indus endow'd,
 France and Spain she thought onions might rear,
 What suited each crime, on each crime she bestow'd,
 And freedom she sound nourish'd here.

Four Cardinal Wolseys she left on this isle,

As gardeners to cherish the root,

The blossoms of liberty *laughing* did smile,

And ev'ry one fed on the fruit.

Not fled—nor yet dead—is the bounty so rare,

Let's preserve it well painted as given,

We will while we've breath, - yes, we'll grasp it to
death,

And return all unfainted to heaven.

Amen, said the singer, and the room re-
sounded with applause.

The president had the appointing of a
deputy, or vice-president; and before he
began the song, made his choice in the
following words, (addressing the brick-
layer by name,) "Brother mincer,
I points you deputy, or my right hand,
so go to the end of the table, and face
me." My friend, on the deputy taking
his seat, whispered the following lines:

"For sure a pair was never seen,
So justly formed to meet by nature."

which observation, in the course of the evening, was fully justified; but I cannot repeat their various blunders, and my reader may already be prepared to think with the Irishman, that *too much of one thing is enough.*

The schoolmaster, who appeared to have just sense enough to render himself ridiculous, had been running about the room at different times, during the song, talking, and disturbing the whole company. "That man, (said my friend) who is just capable of teaching children to read and scribble, is the greatest child in his school; however, the fellow is happy, for he has a good opinion of himself, and too little penetration to perceive, that by others he is laughed at and ridiculed;—perfectly insignificant, his learning is of that frothy kind, which is gained by skimming the surface of trifling science."

This conversation, if it can be so called, passed while the glass was circulating; after the toast had gone round, the president called on the baker for a song, saying, "Mr. Batch was born under a singing plant;*"—at this instant the door opened, and the doctor entered. The reader will figure to himself, better than I can describe, his appearance;—imagine to yourself a tall, thin, middle-aged man—of a copper complexion—large nose—with a leathern cap, like a helmet, on his head—a close-buttoned coat, which nearly reached his ancles—black stockings—and dirty red slippers—the very image of the renowned knight of Cervantes; in short, as Dr. Johnson observes, in one of his *Rambles*, *burlesque cannot go beyond him*.—slowly he approached, and seating himself in a chair, thus began:

* I apprehend he meant planet.

"Servant, gemmen—the most horridlest affair in nature, has kept me from this good company so long;"—anxiously did the company enquire into the cause; after taking a copious draught of ale, he began his relation in the following words:

"You must know, gemmen, as I was sitting in my shop this evening—thinking of nothing at all—a sudden rap at the door alarmed me—presently the latch was lifted up, and a gemman all in black entered the door, and advanced towards me;—Pray sir, says I, what may you want with me, says I;—my business along with you, says he, is to come along with me, says he—Where are you going to? says I—but a little way off, says he;—so I went with him to the door, and a few steps off I saw a lady laying as if dead in the road:—That lady has fainted, says he, and I want you to help me convey

her where she may have immediate assistance ;—as he *axed* me, I went ;—we lifted her up, and brought her into my shop, when placing her in a chair, I felt her pulse, and found they had *abandoned* her, as we call it, and so I told the gemman ;—the lady then opened her eyes ; So, says I, the pulse must have come back again, now, says I ;—then another gemman in black came in, who pulled off the lady's glove, which I did not see she had on, and feeling her pulse, said, ' the springs of the machine were much lowered,' and desired I would procure a glass of wine.

" I had a bottle of home-made wine up stairs, which I went for, but hearing a rumbling below, I immediately returned, and found all the company vanished.

" For some time after, I was a little

frightened; but recollecting the last gentleman had mentioned the springs of the machine, and calling to mind the rumbling I had heard, I thought they had gone away in a carriage—but who they are—what they are—or where they live—I cannot tell.

This story at first caused some consternation, but my friend saying the doctor must have been asleep, and dreaming, and the doctor confessing he had taken a nap, but that what he related happened after he waked, the whole of the story was laughed at, as the effects of a distempered brain.

The schoolmaster now desired Mr. Batch would oblige them with his Stage Coach, which he did in the following words,—a copy of which my friend procured for me.

The Baker's Song.

To a stage coach we aptly may liken this nation,
 Where passengers seldom are pleas'd with their station;
 Such wrangling and jangling, such jostling and jum-
 bling,
 The inside folk grin, and the outside folk grumbling.

The ins they are in, and the outs they are out,
 To be in is the riddle that makes all this rout;
 The outs call the ministry infamous elves,
 And the ins, when they're out, say the same thing
 themselves.

'Tis cunning credulity ever enslaves;
 This world is a hot bed to raise fools and knaves;
 They pull this way—pull that way—sometimes pull
 together,
 But common sense scorns to go partner with either.

My country, my freedom, and oh, my religion,
 These tickle the ears—faith like Mahomet's pigeon;
 'Tis the time's cant—the farce—the finesse of all ages,
 For which the best actors oft get the best wages.

My country—but hold, sir, on which side the
 Tweed?
 Hoot, the de'el on your word, mon, if you dinna
 tak heed;
 We give praise to one side, the other abuse,
 Can the unborn their place of nativity choose?

Get—get—is the cry, now—and get all you can,
If you can get—get honestly—but get—that's the
plan;

Get one thing, and ev'ry thing else you'll obtain,
For honours are now humble servants to gain.

The African slave-trade some think a disgrace,
But what would they say if at home 'twas the case?
The Guinea trade here keeps a market 'tis certain,
And yes and no's bought and sold, more's the mis-
fortune.

May all such be turn'd off who such dealings be-
friendd, Where honefter men have been sometimes suspended;
May they die, as they liv'd, by all good men abhor'd,
We Britons beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

Amen, said the president; and calling to
his deputy, desired he would give them
his toast or sentiments:—the vice-presi-
dent, filling his glass, said, "Mr. Chair-
man, sir, I gives you—**LOVE AND
ANIMOSITY.**"

They then proceeded to elect a pre-
sident for the ensuing club night—being

informed by my friend that they did not pursue the common practice of taking the chair in rotation, but chose one from the attending members, and that the approbation of the company, to the person offered, was taken by a shew of hands;—one of the farmers proposed Mr. Batch the baker, which being duly seconded, the president desired those who approved of the motion would hold up their hands, when every hand in the room was held up—the chairman then desired those who disapproved, would hold up their's, but as all the hands had been held up in approbation, none were found to contradict; when the president declared the sense of the company in the following words, “it is carried *you animals*,” meaning, I suppose, unanimous.

I cannot tell if other country clubs resemble this: the members here, I doubt

not, were honest men, but through the whole course of my life, I never remember to have encountered, in so small a company, such a number of innocent beings, in the "happy state of ignorance;" with some few exceptions, they might be stiled, an assemblage of the children of nature at full growth.

As I am about to take my leave of the club, with which the reader, I apprehend, must be as tired as myself, I shall conclude this chapter.



CHAP. III.

A Visit—Sketch of the Doctor's Life.

The tide of wee has never overwhelm'd me;

Hope has been my anchor through a sea of trouble.

DOCTOR'S LIFE.

WE had received an invitation to dine with a gentleman on the following day, who resided at the other end of the village, therefore, wishing the company at the club a good night, left them about nine o'clock, and returned home, where, after a moderate supper, we retired to rest.

In the morning, after breakfast, my friend proposed a walk; when the first person we met, was our last night's president at the club, with a swaggering

stut, and a vacant stare; his head nodding all the way, like a Mandarin figure on a chimney piece.

“There are scenes in the great drama of life, said my friend, in which that silly fellow acts a useful part; he is a mirror that shews us folly in its proper shape, and warns us not to follow its delusive steps.”

A little before one o'clock, we repaired to our dinner engagement, and were received in a very polite manner by the gentleman and his wife. Soon after our arrival we sat down to a plain, but plentiful table; no wine was introduced, but excellent ale, and table beer, of their own brewing: after a hearty meal, we adjourned into the garden, where we smoked a social pipe, over a bowl of good punch.

I here related the story of the barber-surgeon, as told by himself at the club the preceding evening.

The gentleman of the house informed us; he was well acquainted with the doctor, had heard the whole of his life from himself, and doubted not his brain was in some measure affected; adding, we will send for him, and enquire further into the affair.

A servant was dispatched to the doctor, requesting his company, who almost instantly made his appearance in the same dress we had seen him in the night before, and in nearly the same words, related his former tale.

He was desired to sit down and partake of our fare, when at the particular request of our host, he gave us the fol-

lowing sketch of his life; in recounting the various scenes, he spoke in the same vulgar jargon, in which the story of the preceding night had been told; as I disapproved the stile, I have taken the liberty to put it into another dress; he began with the same words that I have put for a head to this chapter, and in a true theatrical tone, exclaimed:

"The tide of woe has never overwhelm'd me;
Hope has been my anchor through a sea of trouble:
Adversity I have known, but content has followed."

"I owe my birth, on the mother's side, to a female belonging to a band of Egyptian mendicants; but who was my father I never heard; I remember being carried at the back of this woman, who, notwithstanding her dress and complexion were rather forbidding, obtained admission into every house we came to, by her art of casting a prying look on the palm of each enquirer's hand.

“ She gained a good deal of money in this way, but whether she was tired of lugging me about with her, or imagined I was able to get my own living, I know not; she left me one evening under a hedge, while asleep, and I never heard of her afterwards; when I awaked and missed her, I roared lustily; a travelling tinker passing by at the time, took me on his ass, and, as his assistant, I travelled over great part of the kingdom.—The tinker was a merry fellow, sung a good song, and no bad workman; I staid with him some years, and am convinced I earned my living.—Manhood now began to dawn, and I quitted the tinker to trade on my own bottom.

“ I first joined a quack doctor; while with him I had some adventures in the way of gallantry—but such as are not worth mentioning; I now sat down seri-

ously to learn to read, and by the assistance of my master, acquired some trifling knowledge of books; could repeat stories of haunted houses, play some slight-of-hand tricks, and for an hour together amuse the company in a country public-house.—At this time our Andrew left us, and I was preferred to fill that important place—here I thought to be happy; but no situation is free from its vexations, love stepped forward to destroy the tranquillity I felt—it was the charming daughter of an old woman that sold pies, which claimed my adoration.—I promised her marriage, and she followed me to Ireland.

“I had saved some money in the employ of my late master, but an idle and dissipated life soon dispersed it, and deprived me of the means of support; to add to this misfortune, my faithful dul-

cinea put herself under the protection of a methodist parson.

“My money being exhausted, necessity, the parent of invention, prompted me to turn shoe-black, and I spent my mornings in that occupation; in the evenings I attended the theatre with a link: one night, having made rather too free with whisky, I attracted the notice of an actress, who swore I was fit to play ‘the Dog of Venus: or, the Blackamoor Oh tell-her.’

“I had for some time been acquainted with a strolling player, and was, through his means, installed candle-snuffer in the company of which he was a member; I had an aspiring genius—by degrees I acquired a love for the stage, and had performed some characters with tolerable applause. Having quitted my office of candle-snuffer, and commenced actor, I

studied day and night, and performed in every thing, tragedy, comedy, pantomime, interlude, opera, and farce, and was generally as much troubled with money as a fish is with feathers.

“ On the night of my benefit, the house was a bumper—the play, King Richard the Third—I had filled the part of Richard—the farce was the Padlock—my face was blacked for Mungo, the manager’s wife played Ursula—she was a pretty woman—in the drunken scene I caught and kissed her with fervency; the black left my cheeks for her’s—the house roared with laughter—she was mortified and ran off—I ran after—caught and dragged her on again—there was a thunder of applause; I kissed her again—more black appeared on her face, and nothing was heard, on all sides, but encore, encore—her husband,

who performed the part of Don Diego, came on the stage, and in a rage of passion, abused both her and me—kicked the candles about, and acted like a madman; in short, the next morning I quitted the place. By my benefit I had cleared five guineas; at night I was in Kinsale.—I got a passage in a vessel bound to Liverpool, and in three days found myself in that great commercial town.—There my cash was soon melted, and having learned to open a vein and mix a few harmless medicines, while with the quack doctor, I easily got engaged as surgeon's mate of a ship, bound to the coast of Africa, for the purchase of slaves. Nothing material happened during the voyage; the conduct on board slave ships is too well known to need my description.

“On our return, I received what remained due of my wages, and quitted the

employ for ever, heartily tired of a sea life.

“ I once more lifted under the banner of a travelling mountebank, as his Merry Andrew; this person understood drugs pretty well, having made phyfic in some measure his study, and in those low sallies of humour so necessary to his business, he stood unrivalled;—in a little time, with the doctor’s instructions, I cut a capital figure, and was frequently honoured with the title of a d—n’d clever fellow. I may here be said to have been comfortably fixed, but how transient and short-lived is hope;—in a few months my master drank himself into a fever—was hurried into another world—and I was again obliged to shift for myself.

“ My understanding had never soared above my rank in life, but disappoint-

ments had sowered my temper ; I became tired of every thing, and determined to enter into the army, when chance, about twenty years ago, directed me to this village.

“ The barber of the place was just dead ; as I had learned to comb a wig, and shave, I took his shop, succeeded him in business, and manage to pick up a living.—I go but little from home (continued the doctor) for the following reason ; when first I settled here, going one day to a village a few miles distant, I observed a great number of pigs running about, and mentioned in company, that I supposed all the inhabitants *kept pigs* ; it was afterwards reported that I had said all the inhabitants *were hogs*.

“ I was mortified, but not ashamed, at the report, which I had shortly after an

opportunity of contradicting, but the character of the reporter had rendered it unnecessary, no person having credited him."

Here the doctor finished the history of his life, and receiving our thanks, with a suitable present, took his leave.

I make no doubt but he was a little affected in the brain, yet perfectly harmless and inoffensive.

After his departure, our conversation became general, mixed with loyal and friendly toasts.—At length, we were insensibly led to the discussion of some late publications.—“It is certain, (said our kind entertainer) that it is the duty of every man, to conform himself to the laws and customs of the country in which he lives, and not, out of a wretched affectation of superior talents and understanding

to others, to advance new notions and new opinions ; men in general are by no means capable of judging of things abstracted, and out of the common road, and therefore the authors who trouble themselves or others, with such kinds of writings, can have no end in it either (prudent or honest.)

“ Those sentiments, said I, lead me to condemn a late vile publication, the author of which could have no *good* end in view ;—had he put his abilities to a proper use, he might have promoted, by his writings, the cause of religion and virtue.”

“ Religion, said my friend, will continue to be a check upon vice, while it has any footing at all in the world ; but writings of nonsense and treason, to turn the hearts of the people against the go-

vernment, to set them at variance with one another, and to stir them up to tumult and sedition, have been the works of this writer."

"Let him practise the contrary method, (replied our entertainer) and see if the taste of the public is so vitiated and depraved, that they can endure nothing which is not stuffed with TREASON, BLASPHEMY, and NONSENSE."

At the close of this sentence we were invited into the house to tea, and found the mistress of the mansion with a female neighbour, who after some little conversation, begged the lady to fulfil her promise, by shewing her the history she had mentioned to have found in the house, on her first coming to it.

"Gentlemen, said our hosts, the his-

tery my friend enquires after, is a number of loose papers I discovered in a closet of this house; they want arranging; if either of you will take the trouble of putting them together, you may employ a leisure hour and amuse us: but my friend here has often promised me to relate some of the scenes of her past life, which if agreeable to recite now, will enhance the favour, as so many more persons will be obliged."—The lady bowed assent, and immediately complied with her friend's request, by favouring the company with the following narrative:

"My life has been unfortunate, without much variety, said she; I was born in London; my father, whose name was Masters, had acquired a handsome fortune in trade, but losing my mother when I was only four years of age, he relinquished business, though he still con-

tinued to reside in town; I was placed at a boarding school in the country, visiting my father only twice a year, at the usual times of vacation: it was on the last of these visits, when I was in my twentieth year, and leaving school, that I found at my father's house, a young gentleman, who had an estate left him in America, which he was soon going to take possession of.

“ I was alone in the dining room, one day, when this gentleman entered; he had several times before appeared to notice me with particular attention, and I must confess myself not at all displeased with his person and manners—need I say more—this meeting induced the youth to postpone his voyage for some time; to be brief, we soon came to a right understanding, and the next day was fixed on for this gentleman (whose name

was Horton,) to apply to my father for his consent to our union.

“ The application was made, and met my father’s approbation, on condition that it should be deferred till Mr. Horton’s return from America; this was cheerfully submitted to, on our parts, and he prepared for his voyage; as every thing was ready, in a short time he set sail, and in about three months we received a letter, informing us of his safe arrival at the destined port, and his expecting to be back with us in about three months more.

“ Soon after the receipt of Mr. Horton’s letter, my father had a fall from his horse, which brought on a fever, and in less than a week I had the misfortune to lose this, my only, parent.

“ Death is a theme, generally filled with horror and melancholy; I shall therefore wave the account of my feelings on that occasion, and proceed to inform you that Mr. Horton arrived, and in due time we were married.

“ My husband had some business to transact in the island of Madeira, which required his presence there, and it being a fine season of the year, it was agreed I should accompany him. We went on board our vessel in the month of May, and had proceeded as prosperous as could be wished, for the space of ten days, when one morning a ship, which hoisted foreign colours, appeared to be crowding all the sail she could after us, and coming near, we discovered that they were Turks, and much more numerous than our people.

“ They immediately ordered, and expected, us to strike ; but they were mistaken ; our people, in spite of the superiority of the enemy, made a gallant resistance, notwithstanding which, the Turks, by dint of numbers, gained the victory ; yet it cost them dear, one half of their crew laying dead upon the deck.

“ My husband was one of those who principally signalized themselves in the engagement ; he was the last who fought with the greatest bravery against several young Turks, whose courage he inflamed by his vigorous resistance, while they endeavoured to board us, but at length he was taken prisoner, and our ship struck her colours.

“ The Turks divided their plunder, and the captain made me *his* prize ; they took all imaginable care of my dear hus-

band, but the wounds he had received were mortal,—he expired in my arms.

“ The Turkish rover, whose name was Morad, on arriving at the port, took me to his house;—he lived in a small village near the sea, and had long possessed wealth enough to enable him to make a considerable figure as a private man; but liking the life of a rover, he continued it with prodigious success, till having amassed a very large fortune, he intended this should be his last voyage, having built a great house, bought a number of slaves, and was the most powerful man in the place; he had no wife, his chief favourite was one of the handsomest women ever seen, but had the art of concealing, under the specious appearance of good nature, one of the most wicked hearts in the world.

“ The Turk, immediately on our ar-

rival at his house, informed his favourite of my husband's uncommon bravery, and the greatness of mind he had discovered in his last moments; he added, that this man, before he expired, had besought him to treat his wife with kindness;—‘ I promised, said he, to comply with his desire, and will keep my word; let it be your care, therefore, to see that she wants for nothing.’ Zulica, (for so the favourite was named) endeavoured to persuade him that it was not necessary I should be in their house, and advised my being sent to another, where I should be under less restraint.—Zulica said this with no other view, than to judge by the answer Morad should make, whether his care of me was the effect of generosity only.

“ She had seen, and thought me handsome, from thence concluded, that this care which Morad ordered should be

taken of me, arose, very possible, from the impression my person might have made on his heart. Morad answered, that he approved my staying there;—
 ‘ It will give us, said he, a much better opportunity of looking after her; how ill should I keep my promise made to her dying husband, was I to begin by putting her out of my house—her misfortunes claim our pity—she SHALL be well treated, and I will take the earliest opportunity of sending her home to her own country.’ But Zulica thought he was attempting to impose on her by a pretended benevolence, which the rancour of her mind made her think the work of art; however, to be certain, she resolved to say no more at that time.

“ I had been with them nearly a year, and though a captive, needed but to form a wish, and it was immediately indulged.

One day, Morad had received intelligence of a French vessel having arrived in the port, for the purpose of redeeming some slaves; he sent for me into a saloon, informed me of the arrival of this vessel, and offered to procure me a passage home.

“ My heart appeared to be much lighter on a prospect of returning to England; I acknowledged his repeated former marks of attention to me, with thanks, and this last act of goodness, with tears, which stopped the utterance of words, and I retired.

“ Hitherto Zulica had perceived nothing to confirm her suspicions; but being told by her maids, that I had been alone for some time with Morad, rage and jealousy attacked her by turns—she was tempted to go to Morad and reproach him with falsehood—but her wicked cun-

ning, joined to the fear she was under for her own life, checked her fury, which was succeeded by the dreadful resolution of taking vengeance on Morad and me.— In short, she applied to and bribed the cook, to destroy us that night at supper, by infusing into a dish of which we generally eat, a most subtle poison;—whether it was remorse or dread, I know not, but that domestic informed us of his crime, while placing the dishes on the table.— At the time he was speaking, Zulica sat in the posture of one oppressed with rage and despair; the cook having made a full discovery, Zulica drew a small vial from her pocket, and holding it out;—‘ See here, (cries she to Morad) the same kind of poison which thou shouldst have swallowed; but since it did not serve my purpose against thee, I myself will reap one advantage by it,—it shall now finish my

wretched life, and give you liberty to enjoy your Christian slave.'

" She had no sooner uttered these words, than she swallowed the contents of the vial—the poison worked most powerfully—for presently after, her face was spread with a ghastly paleness, and the most hideous distortions shewed she was near her end. — She died uttering the following words, in a dreadful hollow tone :—' I wish, said she, that the poison which now tortures me, could pass into your bowels, and rack thee and thy Christian captive.' — Then with a frightful groan, expired.

" For three days after this horrid event, I saw nothing of Morad, but on the fourth morning he made his appearance at breakfast, bringing with him the captain of the French ship, who he informed me was to

fail that day; my trunks, and every article belonging to me, had been sent on board the ship by Morad's orders, who, after breakfast, wishing me health and a safe voyage, retired,—and I saw this benevolent man no more.

“To make short of my melancholy story, I went on board the French ship, and arrived in France, from whence I got safe to England, settled my affairs in London, and retired here, where I have resided for the last twenty years, contented as my past misfortunes will admit, without repining at the just decrees of fate.”

Here it is proper to give the reader time to consider, whether the specimen he has already had, will encourage him to look into the papers found in the lady's closet;—for that purpose I shall close this chapter.

CHAP. IV.

I arrange the Papers—their Contents.

A very small part of mankind have capacities large enough, to judge of the whole of things.

TRENCHARD.

I Offered my service, and the next morning a small trunk was sent to my friend's house; on examining the inside, I found it contained a number of loose papers, wrote in a fair hand, which, after some trouble in assorting, I discovered to be a history or tale; but a paper which appeared to have no connection with the others, lay folded and sealed up by itself; this I opened, and on perusing its contents, shall not hesitate or apologize to my readers, for presenting it to their inspection first; it was as follows:

" I am naturally of a chearful, satisfied temper, and yet my finest prospects are sometimes overcast with gloomy mists, that make my hours roll sluggishly along, and I know these foes to my alacrity derive their existence, and gain their force, from rest and inactivity.

" There is this difference in the event between business and idleness ; the man of business wears away his spirits by hurry and exercise, while those of the idle man contract rust, and become useless from indolence and folded arms.

" When we have nothing to do, we are fit to do nothing, and our having too much time upon our hands, makes us slaves to laziness.

" It is odd that idleness should prove such a prevailing, irresistible habit, as it

generally does, but it derives its strength from our weakness, and grows powerful by stripping us of all our power ; it is a magical tyranny, which possesses us with an obstinate unwillingness to break loose from our captivity to sloth and ease.

“ Before I became that *useful* member of society, called an *author*, I have often said with great self-denial, that I did not believe any man ever lived, for whom the world was less the better or the worse—I became a perfect recluse, and thought the following epitaph out of *Camden's Remains*, would equally suit myself or any other person :

“ Here lieth one that was born and cry'd,

“ Liv'd several years, and then he dy'd.”

To which might have been added a couplet of Mr. Prior's, a little altered :

“ His greatest action which we find,

“ Was, that he wash'd his hands and din'd.”

“ But since I have fallen into an active scene of life, and am become an *instructor* of mankind, I think myself entitled to a different kind of epitaph ; but to proceed with my subject, idleness and too much ease, are certainly the most *painful* things in the world ; the make, form, and happiness of the human system, require motion and exercise for its relief and preservation ; and as action is natural and necessary, it is as pleasant as it is useful : this is so true, that the idle man himself, while he does nothing, is always resolving to do something, and is in constant vexation and pain till he sets about it.

“ But a number of amusements together, offering themselves to his meditation and choice, as he sits insipidly and stupid under his considering cap, his imagination is pulled twenty different ways at once, and his resolution takes no way

at all; and thus the *idler* remains in suspense and pain, and because he has a thousand ways to divert himself he chooses *none*, though he wishes for *any*.

“The Duke of Rochefaucault says of laziness, ‘*that it shamefully restrains our searches after knowledge, and is the cause that no man ever pushed his capacity so far as it would go.*’

“I believe I shall neither contradict the opinion of the *physicians*, nor the experience of the *patients*, if I assert that idleness has a mighty hand, both in the creation, nursing, and nourishing of the spleen and vapours.

- “Idleness, weak and languid as it is, never fails to triumph in the end, over the more hot and violent passions of love and ambition; both our passions and our

virtues are insensibly consumed by it, and it brings on complaints which shorten our days, and is sure to end in misery, disappointment, and regret.

“ But persons have been found to argue in defence of idleness; it must be owned there are some public advantages arising from it, and that it greatly promotes the excise, by filling coffee houses and taverns; an honest fellow gets drunk, because he has nothing else to do, and then quarrels and fights with his companion, because he has no other work upon his hands;—but I am of opinion, with submission to the *college*, that toping or boxing is not *proper* exercise.

“ The natural bent of our nature is to be active, yet there are many, as it were, who *labour to be lazy*. If it is a question upon what our diligence ought to be em-

employed, let this rule be our guide; *to be employed about that which makes for the mutual benefit and happiness of ourselves, and of mankind in general.* Yet notwithstanding this partiality in some for idleness—I admire industry more; and am justified in my judgment both by the theory and practice of those discerning persons, who best know its value, I mean the careful inhabitants of each trading town:—in those depots of wealth, industry shines with a proper lustre, and is held in due esteem; there it showers down riches upon its faithful votaries, with the additional blessings of health and long life;—here, if at all, the advocates for idleness have a claim, for as industry produceth wealth, so doth wealth make bigots;—it is worshipped by some as a demigod,—nay by others as *Jupiter Ammon, the father of all the gods.* But against this

argument let me only urge, that IDLENESS
IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL,—THE PARENT
OF EVERY ILL."

With this fragment, as I am of opinion
nothing better can be introduced, I shall
close this chapter.

CHAP. V.

"I will a round unvarnish'd tale deliver."

*History of George Watson—Situation in early
Life—sent to School by Mr. Benson.*

WHAT follows, is the tale, or history,
found in the trunk, as mentioned before;
I shall use no preface to introduce it to
my reader, only mention, that I have di-
vided the story into chapters, to corres-
pond with the former part of this work.

According to the custom of biographers, I may probably be expected to begin my history with a long detail of ancestors ; but as I consider true merit to consist in our own virtues, more than a boasted pedigree of heroes in former ages, I shall proceed to inform my reader, that my first ideas of recollection found me in the care of a poor woman, whom I used to call mammy ; she treated me with humanity, and when at the age of seven years, I assisted her in fetching and carrying letters and messages to and from the market town, and village, where we lived, in a small house, or rather hut, about four miles from Birmingham in Warwickshire ; in this village there was only two good houses, though there were several in the neighbourhood, one of them was occupied by a widow lady, from whom myself and mother received every mark of kindness, always dining in her kitchen with the ser-

vants on a Sunday,—and my mother never failed taking me with her to church in the morning of that day, when if my cloaths were coarse and homely, they were always clean and free from rags;—the other large house was occupied, in the summer months only, by a gentleman of very considerable practice in the law, while his business was carried on in the market town, by a number of clerks.

This gentleman, whose name is Benson, was distinguished by virtues that raised him above the mass of mankind; possessed of piety and benevolence, he only saw the sufferings of others, to hold out the hand of relief as far as his power permitted; had not his fortune and income been considerable, the many calls on his nature must have impoverished him, though they could not lessen his desire of doing good;—he had some near relations in

but indifferent circumstances, to them he was generous without ostentation, and their daily prayers were offered up to the throne of heaven, for his happiness and prosperity. About my eighth year this gentleman came to his country seat, to spend a month or six weeks, and I had been several times to his house with letters and messages, when one day he observed me going out of his yard, and called me to him. "My good lad, said he, are not you dame Watson's son?" "Yes, sir," I replied; "And do you go to school?" "No, my mammy can't afford to send me to school." "And do you never learn any thing?" "Oh, yes, sir, the lady at the other great house has given me some books, and my mammy has learnt me to read in them." "Well," said the gentleman, putting a shilling into my hand, "be a good boy, and I will send you to school,—tell your mother to

call on me." I ran home overjoyed at the thought of going to a school, related the whole of my conversation with Mr. Benson, and begged my mother would go to him directly, as he wanted to speak to her.

The next morning the good old woman cleaned herself, and went to Mr. Benson's, who enquired if I was her own son, and how long her husband had been dead; she replied that I was her own child; that my father was not dead that she knew of, but had left her when I was only six months old; that she then kept a small shop in London, which, as her husband had left her much in debt, she was obliged to quit, and giving up every thing to the creditors, had come to this village, which was her native place; that by washing for the neighbouring gentlefolks, and going on their errands, she had made shift to

procure a living for herself and me, but nothing vexed her more than not being able to put me to school.

"If you will let me have the boy," (said this gentleman) I will have him properly cloathed, send him to school, and when he is capable, place him in my office, where, if he is deserving, he shall not want for every assistance in my power, and may, and I hope will, make a good man."

My mother thanked him with tears of joy, yet hoped she should see her dear George sometimes. "Your own situation," (said Mr. Benson) will give you that opportunity as often as you need desire; for Mrs. Benson, who is in want of a housekeeper, is willing to take you into her service in that capacity, and I am certain this house cannot be in more careful hands, from

the general good character you bear; therefore, if this proposal is agreeable, you and your son may remove as soon as convenient, as we shall not stay more than another month before we return to town. I wish to place your boy at a good school, till such time that (without making him a gentleman) he may be able to assist me, and serve himself."

The next day, the taylor who lived in the village, had orders to make two new suits of cloaths, and every thing else that was necessary to fit me out decent, was added by this charitable man; my mother was supplied with a quantity of Mrs. Benson's cloaths, and established in her new and happy situation,—no longer dame Watson, but Mrs. Watson, the house-keeper at squire Benson's.

I was placed at a school about ten miles

off, and at each vacation was a week with Mr. Benson in town, and the remainder of the time with my mother, at his house in the country.

I shall pass over the five years spent at school, as nothing very particular happened;—my mother was informed by Mrs. Benson, that her husband was perfectly satisfied with my improvement, and now, as I was thirteen years of age, he meant to be in the country next Midsummer, at which time I should leave the academy, and after staying a month with the family at their country house, go with them to town, where I was to be placed in his office as a clerk.

CHAP. VI.

George Watson leaves School—settled in Mr. Benson's Office as a Clerk.

THE Midsummer vacation arrived, and taking an affectionate leave of the master and boys, I quitted school, and went to Mr. Benson's country house, where the family had arrived a few days before. My patron now treated me like a son, and the numerous marks of favour shewn me, both by Mr. and Mrs. Benson, made my poor mother the happiest creature imaginable.

After staying a month, the family returned to town, taking me with them; at the same time Mr. Benson assured my mother, that I should be allowed to visit

her twice a year, as before, at Christmas and Midsummer, and spend a week each time,—we parted with the greatest pleasure resulting from this promise.

In the town my scene of life was changed;—I was articled to Mr. Benson for the term of five years, introduced into his office as Master Watson, and treated with kindness by every part of the family, which consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Benson,—their daughter, an accomplished young lady, who had just left school,—two young gentlemen, who were under articles to Mr. Benson,—and myself.

Here again I had no reason to regret my change of situation;—I accompanied the family, after office hours, on most of their parties of pleasure, and never spent an evening out of my patron's house, unless with some part of his family, though

frequently solicited to do so by the other clerks.

Near four years were expired of my time, and I had continued to visit my mother twice in each year, while the kindness of Mr. Benson, and every part of his family, seemed, if possible to increase.—Miss Benson had a heart that needed no prompting to tenderness and humanity; the story of George Watson, when a child, had frequently met her ear, and pity bedewed her cheek with tears. “Alas, said she, how has my kind father drawn from misery and wretchedness, this young man, who with an amiable mind and fine person, might adorn a court.”—This young lady was about my own age, possessed of a beautiful face, and finely formed, but I had never dared to look on her with

other eyes than those of respect and gratitude.

I was now in my eighteenth year, when one evening Mr. Benson sent for me into his library, and desiring me to take a chair, spoke as follows :

“ Mr. Watson, I hope the stipend I have hitherto allowed you, has been sufficient to answer those purposes for which it was intended.” — I assured him it had been more than sufficient ;— I should before have informed my reader, that this gentleman had, from my first entering his service, allowed me thirty pounds a year for cloaths and pocket money.—He proceeded thus : “ Your own reason will convince you, sir, that the majority of every nation must of necessity consist of the poor, and if the majority can be improved, there is great

reason to suppose that many in the minority will receive benefit from the example, and that upon the whole, so much good will be produced, as may be said to meliorate the morals of the whole people.

“ The situation in which I found you, with the reward I have received from your good behaviour and attention to my concerns, is a proof of what I have advanced;—I sent for you to confess my entire satisfaction of your past conduct, and express my thanks.”—My heart was full,—I could only shew my gratitude in tears,—when rising, he desired I would think on what he had said, and left me.



CHAP. VII.

Set out on a Journey—relieve a distress'd Traveller—arrive at my Journey's End.

I Lost not a word of what my patron had said, but no part pleased me so much as his approbation of my past conduct, expressed in so kind a manner.

I was now in the last year of my articles, and, next to the principal clerk, considered the first in the office.

Particular business made it necessary that Mr. Benson, or some person in whom he could confide, should go into Wales, to take possession of an estate, which had been recovered by a law-suit, for a poor man, who had been first deluded, and

afterwards ruined, by sharpers, till Mr. Benson engaged in the business, and soon brought the affair to an issue, when an estate of five hundred a year, and some thousands in the funds, were to be delivered to their right and lawful owner.—I was thought qualified to transact this business, and a day appointed for my setting out.

A young man, who had been lately taken into the family as a servant, was equipped in Mr. Benson's livery, and accompanied me on the journey.

We were each mounted on a horse of my patron's, the lad carrying in a portmanteau, the necessary papers to gain possession of the estate, with several changes of linen for his young master, as I was now stiled, and himself.

The night before I set off on my journey, Mr. Benson sent for me into his study, and desiring I would be seated, accosted me in the following manner :

“ Mr. Watson, you are now in the last year of your articles to me ; your conduct has merited my warmest approbation ; as a proof of my esteem, let me entreat your acceptance of this ; (at the same time putting into my hand a bank note for fifty pounds). “ Remember, continued he, how in your infant years, the Almighty made you his care, and by my means, placed you in a situation, where till now, you have been happy ; you have done nothing to doubt his protection,—continue to deserve it,—be virtuous, and you have no cause to fear ;—heaven has lent me a fortune, on which every child of sorrow has a claim.—If all mankind were of my opinion, indigence

should be unknown in this land of liberty and wealth, but avarice and vanity are enemies to happiness and worth.

“ At the expiration of your clerkship, sir, I have a proposal to make, which I shall defer till then.”—After some necessary instructions respecting the affair I was going on the next day, he shook me by the hand, and wished me a good night.

Thus was I treated by this good man. The God of mercy had taught him compassion, and he gloried in the practice of benevolence.

In the morning I set off on my journey; the lad who accompanied me was about a year younger than myself, his father, who was a tenant of Mr. Benson's, rented a small farm of that gentleman,

and having a large family, he had taken this son into his service as a foot boy—Martin, for that was his name, bore a good character in the family, and had ever been particularly attentive to me;—on our first day's journey, nothing happened worth notice, but towards the close of the second day, we observed a decent dressed elderly looking man, to all appearance dead, laying on the side of the road; we were not far from a house, to which I sent Martin for assistance; he returned with several persons, two of whom bore the poor man to the inn, as it proved to be. He was conveyed to bed, when a groan, the first sign he had given of life, determined me to stay the night;—in the morning he was better, but unable to rise; I went to visit him,—he was thankful,—I begged him, if his strength would permit, to relate the cause of his being in the

dreadful situation I found him on the night before.

“ I had left this kingdom seventeen years, sir, said he, when about a month ago I returned, but not being able to discover a wife I left behind me in London, suppose her dead, and was going to Liverpool, the place of my birth ;—to save expences, I travelled on foot ;—yesterday, having dined at a small alehouse on the road, in the afternoon I proceeded on my journey, and had not got more than four miles, when I met a ruffian, who demanded my money ; seeing only one I attempted to defend myself, but he was too powerful, I received a severe blow on the back part of my head, which deprived me of sense, and I find the villain afterwards robbed me of my watch and money ; but I can easily procure more, as I have placed some in the hands of a friend in town.”

Finding him so far recovered, I left him to the care of the landlord, and pursued my journey, nothing particular happening during the remainder of the way.

CHAP. VIII.

*Complete my Business—return back—meet
with a strange Adventure.*

Angels, and ministers of grace, defend us.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN I arrived at the place where my business was to be transacted, I had the satisfaction to find no opposition made, and taking legal possession of the estate, I placed it under the care of an honest farmer in the neighbourhood, and the third day after our arrival, we set off on our return back.

The morning was delightful, and we travelled thirty miles before I stopped to dine, at a small Welch village, in a pleasant and romantic situation, near Swansea.

After dinner it looked overcast, and I was advised by the landlord to stay till morning before I pursued my journey, but wishing to get to town as soon as possible, I proposed going ten or fifteen miles further that day;—we set off, and after travelling a few miles, it suddenly came on dark; the contending elements seemed to threaten the world with dissolution; the almost incessant peals of thunder made all nature tremble;—we came to two roads—the storm ceased—but it poured torrents of rain, and I found we had by mistake, taken the wrong road;—the storm came on again—it was a night of horror;—poor Martin was totally dejected. “We have lost our road, sir, said he, and

perhaps we may never get home again."

We were now got into a forest,—no person was near to direct us ;—Martin proposed our turning back,—this I would not consent to, as I made no doubt we should find our way again in a short time ; however, we wandered about for a considerable length of time, but no house or road could we distinguish ;—our horses were so fatigued, we could scarce get them to move a step,—the moon began to appear,—the wind and rain ceased, and on a sudden a light was perceived, from what appeared by the light of the moon to come from the window of a tolerable large house.

As we drew near, it seemed to be a great old-fashioned building, situated on the verge of a precipice ; it appeared surrounded by a moat and a high wall, with a large gate in front, and a small door

which stood open, on one side of the gate.

I ordered Martin to apply to a bell that hung at the outside of the small door, imagining humanity and hospitality might dwell within; at any rate necessity compelled me to apply for assistance; on several times ringing, no servant or other person appeared, although the light continued in the window; a large avenue of stately trees formed a line up to the house, we found the draw-bridge down, I dismounted, and delivering my horse to Martin to lead after me, walked up to the door of the house, which appeared open, and seeing a shed adjoining, I ordered him to lead the horses under cover, make them fast, and then return to me.

He soon came back, and informed me he had fastened them to a sort of rack

in the shed, filled with hay—at this moment a clock struck ten.

I ascended the steps, and knocked at the door which stood open, but no creature appeared; we entered without further ceremony into a kind of hall, in which were two chairs and a table; at the end of this hall was a small flight of steps, which I ascended, Martin followed me, trembling all the way like a leaf.

At the top of these stairs was a door, at which I knocked; after waiting some time, and receiving no answer, I applied to the handle of a latch, which lifting up the door appeared to fly open with great force; I attributed this violence to the wind, but Martin, in a low voice, cried, “My dear master, this house is certainly haunted; for God’s sake let us return, take the horses, and endeavour to find our road, as the night is now fine.”

I confess myself in some measure intimidated, but not willing to trust to the forest, and the uncertainty of the weather, I entered the door without taking any other notice of what Martin had said, than desiring him to follow.

As I entered I thought I heard a voice, but in a moment all was still again—my confusion prevented me from taking notice, at first, of a door on the right hand of me that stood half open; looking in, I observed a table, and on it a lamp burning close to a window, this assured me there must be inhabitants, and convinced me it was the light I had first perceived in the forest.

Entering this room I found it hung round with several sorts of arms, such as guns, pistols, swords, &c.—This awful sight made me debate whether I should

continue in the house, as I began to fear it was a haunt for thieves; here was placed a chair on each side of the table, as in the hall below, two doors appeared to open into different apartments, one of which I tried and found locked; I determined to try the other, and if any thing appeared to confirm my fears, to return as speedy as possible, and attempt to find some other asylum for the night.

This other door was open, and led us into a handsome room elegantly furnished, the window curtains and chairs were of blue silk, ornamented with silver fringe; this appearance dissipated my fears, and I went on to examine another room, the door of which stood open on the opposite side to that I had left—this was a neat room, and to our great surprise we found a table spread for two persons; on it was a fine piece of cold roast beef, a plate

with horse radish, and a loaf of brown bread; a candle was burning on a side board, on which was placed a bottle and two tumblers.

Martin wished me to sit down and partake of a supper, which he said seemed provided on purpose for us, and was reaching a chair, but I ordered him to desist for some time at least, till we found whether any persons were in the house, but, notwithstanding our further search, not a soul appeared.

The sight of the supper seemed to have dissipated Martin's fears, but I confess mine were much stronger; I thought the whole had the appearance of enchantment, and at other times I was tempted to think we were in the habitation of a banditti.

The moon was again hid behind a cloud, as I could perceive from the window near which I stood; a noise I heard induced me to turn my head, when I perceived a door which appeared in the wainscot, that I had not seen before.—Having approached and opened it, judge of my surprise, to find a small flight of stairs, at the top of them appeared a man with a blunderbuss pointed directly at me, in the action of firing; I hastily retreated, and Martin, who had followed me, was so terrified that he ran out of the room, but soon returned; I then took the candle in my hand, and again approached the door, expecting to meet the person I had seen with the blunderbuss.—I began to apologize for my intrusion into the house, and entreated he would be so good as to direct us into the right road, which we had lost, at the same time begged pardon if we had caused any alarm to the family;

But receiving no answer, I drew nearer the stairs, and perceived what I had taken for a man was a painting of exquisite art, hung on the wall.

I again dismissed my fears, and ventured up the stairs, which led to a kind of study; here were several books, a violin, and some music, on a table in the middle of the room—two arm chairs were placed opposite each other near the table, I told Martin to sit down in one of them, as I did in the other, intending to examine some of the books, as by their means I apprehended we might discover something that would lead to the solving this mysterious dwelling.

But, to our utter astonishment, no sooner had we placed ourselves in the chairs—than they—with us—the table—and all its contents, suddenly began to sink,

and continued gradually descending for some time; the candle which I had placed on the table Martin in his fright had snatched up, and in the hurry extinguished; we were now in total darkness, and our fears kept us silent.—But I must reserve the remainder of this strange adventure for another chapter.

CHAP. IX.

Finish the Adventure—arrive at Home—admitted a Partner with Mr. Benson—marry that Gentleman's Daughter.

There is no safety where there is no strength—no strength without union—no union without justice—no justice where faith and truth are wanting to fulfil engagements, either public or private.

SIDNEY.

AFTER for some time sinking by the same easy descent, we seemed on a sudden to stop; I found the place we were in received a small glimmering of light,

from what at first appeared a crevice in the wall, but on quitting the chair, and approaching it, followed by Martin, I perceived it was a door way, or entrance into this dungeon; on turning to speak to Martin, I was astonished to find that the chairs, and table, with its contents, on our quitting them, had gradually rose in the same manner as they had descended, and now nearly gained their former situation.

I took no notice of this circumstance to the lad, as he seemed much terrified, but desiring him to keep close to me, I entered the passage from whence the light issued, and was presently roused by a faint voice at some distance from me.

Terror and amazement occupied my mind; I softly whispered Martin to return with me into the cellar or dungeon.

we had left, where we secreted ourselves in a nook, or corner, at the further side.

In an instant afterwards, I felt every faculty absorbed in astonishment, not unmixed with dread; in the passage I had left I saw a sulphurous light beam forth on a sudden, and in the midst of it the figure of a man, followed by a female dressed in white; the man approached the side where we had concealed ourselves, and touching a secret spring in the wall, the table and chairs again descended; the light in the man's hand was sufficient to give me a sight of their persons; both of them appeared to be young and handsome, they got into the chairs, expressed surprise at not finding a candle on the table, and with a hearty laugh ascended, but by what means I could not discover. Poor Martin shivered with affright, but thinking there was no time to be lost, I in a low voice,

desired him to follow me, and again entered the passage; having proceeded about fifty yards, I perceived an opening over our heads, which appeared to be the mouth of a well, and at the same time, by the small glimmering of light from the top, observed a ladder at my feet; by the assistance of Martin I reared it, and we were soon at the top.

Leaving the ladder, we found ourselves in the wood, and perceived the house a short distance from us, to which I returned, and found the horses in the same situation we had left them.

As it was now day break, and the weather fine, alarmed at what we had witnessed, I thought of nothing but escaping; we cautiously led the horses to the outer gate, and mounting them, was soon out

of light of the house, and in our right road.

After riding about eight miles, I stopped to breakfast, and mentioned our last night's adventure to the landlady at the inn, who seemed not at all surprised at the tale; she informed me, the house had belonged to a whimsical old gentleman, who had lived in it for many years, with only one servant; that from his unusual oddities in dress, and keeping no company, the neighbours had supposed him to be out of his mind; that this old gentleman was lately dead;—a nephew* and his wife, who were the lady and gentleman we had seen in the dungeon, were his nearest relations, who had come from London about a week be-

* This gentleman I was afterwards acquainted with, who obligingly favoured me with a copy of his late uncle's life, from a manuscript in the old gentleman's own hand writing; the incidents are so uncommon, and of such a curious nature, that at some future time I propose offering it to the public for their amusement.

fore, to take possession of the premises, and had yesterday been at her house, relating the number of whims and curiosities they had discovered in and about the dwelling—she added the old gentleman's late servant was still in the house, but as the kitchen was at the top of it, most likely she had not heard or known of our being there.

I thanked my hostess for her information, and continuing our journey, on the second day after arrived at Birmingham, without meeting any other matter on the road worth mentioning.

Having related to Mr. Benson the result of my journey, he was pleased to express his approbation—and some time after, being out of my clerkship, he offered me a share of his business; I accepted the kind offer with thanks, engaged a private

house for myself, and took my mother home to manage it.

The conducting of the business now rested chiefly with me; as Mr. Benson advanced in life, he required ease and indulgence, though he still continued to practise.—One day, after having dined with him, and the ladies were withdrawn, he mentioned, as one of the happiest retrospections of his past life, that of taking me under his protection; “It is now, my dear Watson, said he, fourteen years this very day, in the whole of which time you have proved yourself deserving of my esteem; I know no young person I love so much, except my own daughter, and if I mistake not, she sees you with my eyes. In your connection with me, I find my favourite author Sidney justified in his opinion, when he says, ‘there is no safety where there is no strength—no

strength without union—no union without justice—no justice where faith and truth are wanting to fulfil engagements, either public or private.

“The rich, my dear friend, continued he, have so many advantages, both for enjoyment of life, and the improvement of their talents, that in gratitude for them, they ought to contribute whatever they can to the benefit and comfort of the child of poverty. Christianity teaches us to think that the Giver of all good gifts will consider this as a grateful return to him; and experience proves that the improvement of the poor, in decency and good morals, contributes much to the security and accommodation of the rich; how true these lines,

“Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more.”

Let patience ever cherish hope. There was a time when you wanted my assistance, I now want your's." And concluded with a proposal to give me his daughter in marriage, with a fortune of ten thousand pounds. I embraced his generous offer with transport,—we were married, and removed into a larger house.

Here ended, though it did not seem to finish, the tale; but as there were no more papers, I returned them to the lady, and had her permission to take a copy for myself.

The next day, my friend accompanied me to Aylesbury, where we parted; and getting into the coach, after a pleasant journey, I arrived safe in town.

This concludes the account of my friend's first excursion into the country; to which I beg leave to subjoin a few hints, addressed to Critics of a certain description.



Hard is the task of him who attempts to prepare a mental repast for the public; numerous as his guests, are the various inclinations he has to consult; conscious that he cannot please every palate, he culls with epicurean fancy, a delicious morceau from the choicest productions of nature, and endeavours to form of the whole a well seasoned olio; thus, if he cannot compleatly satiate the appetite of every individual, he presents to each a relish of his favourite viand, from which he retires in good humour, divested of acrimony against those ingredients, which he judges less pleasing.

To conciliate the esteem of the candid, it is only necessary to strive after it; men of genius, adhering with scrupulous care, to the true elements of criticism, censure with moderation, and that only when they find error unaccompanied with palliating circumstances: it is this enlivening beam of hope, which encourages the timid adventurer to launch his bark in the stormy ocean of literary pursuits; knowing the ordinary dangers of the voyage, he takes every precaution against them; he fortifies himself to meet the turbulent billows of popular opinion, with the impenetrable shield of caution, and finds himself safe as far as human foresight can reach: but it is only against the shafts of sound criticism that a writer can defend himself, by carefully refraining from transgressing the rules of propriety; there is, alas, a minor species of cavillers, whose envenomed animadversions it is impracticable to guard

against; destitute of candour, as of the sense of discrimination, they attack every publication, whose merit they cannot emulate; of transcendent perfection must that performance be, which cannot afford the envious a pretext for defamation.—How can a generous mind find a pleasure in decrying the work of his neighbour, or think that the petty exultation he finds in debasing merit a sufficient recompence for the trouble he takes, in thus exposing his own malevolence! and though these characters are generally hardened against all sensations of remorse; they sometimes meet with a rebuke, which puts their effrontery to the blush.—*Si mihi purgit quæ vult dicere, ea quæ non vult, audiet.*

Ignorant as these pretenders to knowledge generally are, they plume themselves on being the most inveterate foes of the learned; their invincible weakness

of intellect in no wise disqualifies them from being troublesome to their superiors. Aptly might a man of genius, while thus perplexed, be compared to that noble animal the horse: who can refrain from admiring the tractable disposition of the docile creature; his ready obedience to the commands of his rider; his grateful return for gentleness of usage! on the other hand, view the same animal exasperated to resistance, by repeated acts of barbarity, and how vain will be the attempts of the strongest man to restrain his violence! then it is we admire his ferocious spirit, and the facility with which he conquers the strenuous exertions of his greatest enemy; yet at the same time with what degrading humiliation does he submit to be tormented, without a possibility of resistance, by the wretched swarms of insects, that wage continually against him successful hostility.—Equally con-

temptible are the pigmies who infest the learned world with their frivolous intrusion ; inimical to science, they are continually buzzing in the credulous ear, a tale of slander, and fail not to annihilate with destructive exhalations, the fairest flowers of literary fame :—Futile, however, in the opinion of the discerning man, are such insidious attempts, he views with scorn their malicious efforts, and with the frown of contempt, threatens extermination to their momentary existence.

FINIS.



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SALISBURY.

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